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Author(s): Edwin Curley

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## I. RECENT WORK ON 17TH CENTURY CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY

EDWIN CURLEY

THE decade just past has been a fruitful and exciting one for those interested in the history of continental philosophy in the 17th century. Not only has there been a great deal of work published on that period, but an encouragingly high proportion of it has proven to be well worth publishing. We have good, new translations and critical editions of many works of both major and minor figures, new bibliographical guides to the literature on them, and a growing body of instructive secondary works. The history of philosophy seems now to be attracting, with much greater frequency than was the case, say, 20 years ago, writers who combine a sympathetic and scholarly approach to the philosophers they study with genuine philosophical competence of their own in sorting out the issues raised and saying something about those issues. While there is still much that needs to be done to improve our understanding of the period, the record of the past decade has been a hopeful one.

Under these circumstances, one can hardly expect to do more than give a brief indication of some of the highlights of recent work. I shall concentrate on studies of the philosophers whom I regard as major and central—Descartes, Spinoza, Malebranche, and Leibniz—leaving it primarily to the bibliography to provide some guide to the often very interesting work on philosophers who must be regarded as comparatively minor or peripheral (e.g. Bayle, Gassendi, Galileo, and Pascal), and to such aids to scholarship as translations, editions, and bibliographies. Aids to scholarship which are of special interest will be starred items in the bibliography.

### I. DESCARTES

Recent English work on Descartes has concentrated on certain classical cruxes of interpretation—the *cogito*, the circle, and the ontological argument—and has done a great deal to clarify the problems these topics involve. A good example is provided by Hintikka's article on the *cogito* (6).

It is doubtful whether many of the positive suggestions Hintikka makes will survive critical scrutiny, but there is no doubt that the discussion he provoked has been extremely helpful.

The puzzle with which Hintikka is primarily concerned is this: Does Descartes regard his knowledge of his own existence as intuitive or as based on an inference? Both alternatives can be supported textually and both alternatives present philosophical difficulties for the Cartesian system. Descartes does say in the *Regulae* (Rule 3) that everyone sees by an intuition that he exists, that he thinks, and many other things. And in the *Second Replies* he seems to say again that his existence is known intuitively. But this approach invites embarrassing questions about the reliability of our intuitions and about Descartes' right to assume their reliability at the stage in the *Meditations* when he puts the *cogito* forward. Again, in most of Descartes' presentations of the *cogito* he certainly makes it look as though he is inferring existence from thinking. Except for the *Regulae*, which is an early work, and the *Second Meditation*, the standard formula tends to be "I think, *therefore*, I exist." But how is this compatible with the apparent status of "I exist" as a first principle? And how would Descartes justify his reliance on the premisses which, *prima facie*, are involved?

Hintikka offers us the notion of "I exist" as something like a performative utterance, rather than an inference. Contrary to the suggestion of his title, he does not regard the alternative he sets before us as an exclusive one. We need not choose between inference and performance. The *cogito* is both. But Hintikka prefers to emphasize the performative aspect, partly because he thinks that, viewed as an inference, it is not a very good argument.

As an inference, Hintikka contends, the *cogito* is an instance of *modus ponens*, with a suppressed conditional premiss of the form:

$$(i) \quad Ba \supset (\exists x)(x=a)$$

While Hintikka concedes that this conditional is

provable in standard systems of predicate logic, he thinks that in the sense in which it is true it is of no use to Descartes in proving his conclusion. The systems of logic in which (i) is provable all tacitly assume that the singular terms employed really refer to some actually existing individual. If we make this assumption, then before we can assert the categorical premiss of our argument,

(ii)  $Ba$

the "I think," we must be in a position to assert the conclusion,

(iii)  $(\exists x)(x=a)$

the "I exist." The argument will be formally valid and its premisses will be true, but it will be question-begging, since establishing the truth of the conclusion will be a necessary condition of establishing the truth of the categorical premiss.

But if we drop the assumption that all singular terms designate actually existing individuals, then, though we shall be able to determine the truth of our categorical premiss without first determining the truth of our conclusion, the conditional premiss will be false.  $Ba$  will be true where  $Bx$  is read " $x$  thinks" and  $a$  designates Hamlet, but  $(\exists x)(x=a)$  will be false for that interpretation of  $a$  and so  $Ba \supset (\exists x)(x=a)$  will not be a logically true formula. Hintikka has other, textual objections to reading the *cogito* as an inference, but he is well aware that the textual evidence points both ways. This is the difficulty he treats as most serious.

So he proposes to regard the *cogito* as a performance, though this is held to be only the better half of Descartes' insight. Descartes should be viewed as recognizing the absurdity of performing a certain kind of action, denying his own existence. The sentence "I don't exist" though formally consistent, and therefore not logically false, is nevertheless *existentially* inconsistent, and hence, impossible to defend or believe. Its contradictory, "I exist," is therefore self-verifying. This is a sophisticated modern version of the view that "I exist" is certain on intuitive grounds.

A sentence,  $p$ , is existentially inconsistent for  $a$  to utter (assertively) if and only "  $p$  and  $a$  exists" is inconsistent (in the ordinary sense). E.g., "Nixon does not exist" is existentially inconsistent for Nixon to utter. Hintikka speaks of the utterance of a sentence by a person for whom the utterance of that sentence is existentially inconsistent as an *existentially inconsistent statement*.

Normally an existentially inconsistent statement will be pointless, since it will defeat one of the

standard purposes of uttering a declarative sentence, that of making the hearer believe what one says. If the hearer identifies the man speaking as the man the sentence is about, he will recognize that the statement is false. But the hearer might understand the sentence without identifying the speaker as the man the sentence is about. Hence, existentially inconsistent statements are not inevitably self-defeating.

"I do not exist" is a special case in two respects. First, since the function of 'I' is simply to refer to the speaker, the sentence is existentially inconsistent for anyone to utter. Secondly, here it *is* a necessary condition of the hearer's understanding the sentence that he identify the speaker as the man spoken about. Unless he does make the identification, he does not understand the use of 'I'. So "I don't exist" is inevitably self-defeating for anyone to utter assertively, and therefore, absurd in a very special way. Conversely, "I exist" is self-verifying.

One problem for any interpretation along these lines is to explain why Descartes so often gives the illusion that he is inferring his existence from his thought, when really he is recognizing the self-evidence of his existence. What are the words *cogito* and *ergo* doing in the *cogito ergo sum*?

Hintikka's claim is that the "I think" expresses the performatory character of Descartes' insight. It is from an act of thought that Descartes comes to recognize the indubitability of his own existence, viz., the act of trying to think the contrary. Descartes cannot *think* that he does not exist, in the sense of making himself believe it. The attempt to make himself believe that he does not exist is necessarily self-defeating. So the relation of *cogito* to *sum* is more a causal one than a relation of inference. A certain (attempted) thought act necessarily produces a conviction of existence. It would be more accurate for Descartes to say "By thinking I perceive my existence." But the thinking part is quite essential. Not just any action will do. It must be an act of thought, specifically, an act of trying to persuade myself that I do not exist.

Hintikka's interpretation has a certain philosophical interest in its own right, whatever its value may be for the understanding of Descartes. His remarks about the logical peculiarities of the sentence "I do not exist" strike me as correct and important. But his interpretation encounters some difficulties as an account of Descartes' thought, difficulties which I think have been brought out best in an article by Harry Frankfurt (5).

His criticism centers on Hintikka's explanation of the role of thinking in the *cogito*. There are two main points. First, Hintikka's interpretation requires that the thought act which results in my perception of my own existence have a very specific content: what I am trying to think is that I do not exist. In failing to believe this, I realize that I do exist. But the thought acts with which Descartes is willing to connect his own existence are quite varied in their content—my existence follows from my being persuaded that there are no bodies, no heaven, no earth, etc.; it follows from my judging that the wax exists or from my judging that I do exist. Secondly, Hintikka's interpretation requires that the thought act be of a very special kind. It will not do for the performative interpretation if I simply contemplate the possibility of my not existing, for that is something I certainly can do. The thought act must be an attempt to think my present non-existence with assent. But for Descartes it is clear that a wide variety of thought acts will do. I can infer my existence from my doubting or even from the fact that I entertain the proposition "I exist."

Hintikka, of course, can not be decisively refuted by such evidence. He was familiar with the relevant passages when he first wrote, and his insistence that Descartes did not keep consistently to any one interpretation renders him virtually immune to textual rebuttal. What is needed is a satisfactory answer to his philosophic objections to treating the *cogito* as an inference.<sup>1</sup> And I think the work of Popkin (34) and Frankfurt (4) does point the way to such an answer. What follows is an attempt to outline a possible response. It is not so much an account of what has been said, as a variation on certain prominent themes of recent studies.

Hintikka's central objection seems to be this: If we make certain assumptions about the singular terms we use, then "I think" is logically sufficient for "I exist." But then knowing that "I exist" will be a necessary condition of knowing that I think. And so the inference will not be probative.

One might be tempted to reply that if so, then any valid deductive argument would have to fail as a proof. For if it is valid, the truth of the premisses will be sufficient for the truth of the conclusion and the way will be open for someone to argue that knowing the truth of the conclusion is a necessary condition of knowing the truth of the premiss.

Hintikka's objection to the *cogito* begins now to resemble Mill's objection to the syllogism, and to be applicable to deductive reasoning generally. Many might think this a sufficient response. It is patently false that all deductive reasoning involves a *petitio*.

But would Descartes feel that he could take it for granted that some deductive reasoning is probative? Criticisms of the syllogism like Mill's had been made by the sceptics as early as Sextus Empiricus, repeated by Renaissance writers like Sanchez (see Popkin (34)) and apparently accepted by Descartes himself in the *Regulae*. Would he not have thought that the accusation of question-begging raised a serious problem?

The correct reply to Hintikka's objection, I suggest, is that while the *cogito* is an inference, it is not a demonstration or proof in any classical sense. It is not essential to an inference that the premisses of the inference be known to be true, though this is essential to a proof. It is because we think the *cogito* must be a proof, if it is an inference at all, that we think its premiss must be known (cf. Kenny (8)). But this only obscures the point of Descartes' enterprise.

As Popkin and Frankfurt have stressed, Descartes is fundamentally concerned with overcoming the difficulties raised against "dogmatic" philosophers by the sceptics. I take it that he is particularly anxious about the objections they made against the notion of proof. Proof cannot go on to infinity. The process of establishing one proposition by citing others which entail it and are known to be true must come to an end somewhere in propositions which are not themselves proven. The problem is to find a premiss or set of premisses which can serve as first principles without reasonably incurring the accusation that, since they are not proven, they are merely arbitrary assumptions.

Descartes does not want to rely on the contention that his first principles are self-evident. He knows this would be dismissed by the sceptic as a bare assertion, a matter of subjective conviction, liable to great variation from one person to another. So he adopts a negative procedure for getting his first principles. As Frankfurt puts it, "he establishes truths by removing the grounds for doubting them rather than by proving their truth in a direct way" ((4), p. 174).

Cartesian doubt must always be *reasonable* doubt,

<sup>1</sup> The apparent textual counter-evidence is very well treated in Bernard Williams' article in the Doney collection (3). See also Weinberg (11), Kenny (8) and Röd (10).

but the requirements for reasonable doubt are deliberately very weak. The ground offered for doubting need not have anything positive to be said for it, though in general there should be no intellectually compelling argument against it. Descartes' procedure for "establishing" first principles is to accept all and only those propositions which he can conceive no reasonable ground for doubting. He will systematically apply to his former beliefs the most powerful grounds of doubt he can find. What survives the procedure cannot be said to be accepted arbitrarily. To believe only what you have no reasonable ground for doubting—in this weak sense of "reasonable"—is to have very high standards of rationality. But to accept what survives systematic doubt is not to put something forward as the conclusion of a proof.

That I exist is, as Descartes insists, a first principle. But it is an acceptable principle because it survives systematic doubt. Any ground for doubting my existence which purports to be reasonable will have to explain my erroneous belief in my existence. So it will have to involve the supposition that I think. And thought entails a thinker. So "I exist" is inferred from "I think," but "I think" is not a premiss of a proof, not a proposition which Descartes must take any responsibility for defending as known to be true. It is an essential element in any hypothesis which I might entertain, or an opponent might suggest, to throw reasonable doubt on my existence.

The emphasis placed here on the requirement that doubt be reasonable is also important in Frankfurt's proposed solution to the problem of the circle (4). Suppose we put this difficulty as Arnauld put it—"we are certain that the things we conceive clearly and distinctly are true because God exists . . . we can only be certain that God exists because we conceive that very clearly and distinctly, so before we can be certain that God exists, we must be certain that whatever we conceive clearly and distinctly is true."

Frankfurt's reply is roughly as follows. If being certain is equivalent to being unable to doubt, then it is just a mistake to suppose that we can be certain of God's existence only if we already are certain that whatever we conceive clearly and distinctly is true. So long as we are attending to the proof of God's existence and conceiving it clearly and distinctly, we shall be in a state where *non possumus non credere*. All present clear and distinct ideas compel assent and are, in that sense, indubitable.

But indubitability, in that sense, is not equivalent

to knowing. It is a psychological state of complete conviction, from which we may fall when we are no longer attending to the arguments which induced it. "Indubitable" can, however, be given a normative sense. Though it may be possible to doubt propositions which were once, but are not now, conceived clearly and distinctly, it may not be possible to doubt them reasonably. In the *First Meditation* the supposition that there may be a deceiving God constitutes a reasonable ground for doubting the truth of the things that seem most evident to us. But by the end of the Fourth Meditation it does not since there is then available a compelling argument against this supposition and none in its favor. Frankfurt construes Descartes as concerned to counter the sceptic's claim that the use of reason leads to the conclusion that reason is unreliable, that there are good reasons for being suspicious of the value of good reasons. The Cartesian reply is that a scrupulous use of reason leads rather to the conclusion that reason is reliable.

Such, in its broad outlines, is Frankfurt's reconstruction of the Cartesian position. So far, the reconstruction strikes me as both correct and very illuminating. Indeed, I would be more sanguine than Frankfurt is about the ability of this approach to deal with the philosophical difficulty. But there is a good deal in the detailed development of Frankfurt's position, particularly in (4), which is open to objection.

Frankfurt allows that Descartes' conclusion—that it would never be reasonable to doubt what we perceive clearly and distinctly—may be true without its being the case that all our clear and distinct ideas are true. And he cites a passage from the *Second Replies* in which Descartes appears to admit the possibility that what we intuit is false even though we have no reasonable grounds for suspecting error. He interprets Descartes as being more concerned with the solidity and permanence of his beliefs than he is with their "truth" in any absolute sense. The logic of Descartes' position leads to a coherence, rather than a correspondence, theory of truth, and it is the coherence of our carefully adopted beliefs which God's veracity guarantees. Applying this to the question of the status of scientific theories, a vital problem for Descartes and his contemporaries because of the controversies between the "two great systems" of astronomy, Frankfurt suggests that the *Meditations* imply a Kantian solution to the problem: "men may content themselves with certainty about the phenomena and leave the noumena to God."

This is a strange conclusion for an author who has emphasized Descartes' role as the opponent of scepticism. Popkin (34) cites the same passage from the *Second Replies* and reads it in the same manner. But he treats it as a critical and damaging concession to scepticism. And so it seems to be as Popkin and Frankfurt read it. This gives us a good reason, I think, for seeking an alternative interpretation of the *Second Replies*. Further grounds are provided by the *Principles*, where Descartes takes up an explicit position on the Copernican controversy which cannot, I think, be reconciled with the position Frankfurt finds implicit in the *Meditations*. But this issue is too complex to be argued here.

If Hintikka, Popkin, and Frankfurt have done much for our understanding of the *cogito* and the circle, perhaps the most important contribution of Kenny's excellent book on Descartes (8) lies in his discussion of the ontological argument. The classic objection to the argument, raised, in effect, by Gassendi, well before Kant—is that existence is not a property. What seems to lie behind this objection (cf. Alston (1)) is the view that the existence of a subject of predication is a necessary condition for predicating any property, either truly or falsely, of the subject. If that view is correct, and if existence is a property, then we can never make false positive existential statements or true negative ones. But this is patently false. Thus, existence is not a property.

Kenny argues that Descartes' reply would be to reject the view that true or false predications of properties require an existing subject. We have *a priori* knowledge of, and therefore can make true predications about, the objects studied in geometry. It does not matter that there are not now, never have been, and never will be any such objects. All that is required is that the objects be possible objects. So Kenny interprets Descartes as being committed to something like Meinongian pure objects as subjects of predication. These objects are not to be regarded in a conceptualistic fashion. Their *esse* is not *cogitari*. Rather they impose a necessity on thought.

Kenny does not claim that this is, in the end, a satisfactory way of rebutting the classical objection. Though he holds that Descartes' version of the theory of pure objects avoids some of the difficulties Meinong's encounters, he thinks there are insurmountable difficulties in the notion of non-existent possible individuals, and cites Quine's contention that we lack satisfactory identity conditions for pure objects.

Moreover, Kenny maintains Descartes' answer gives rise to serious internal difficulties in the Cartesian system. If the ontological argument is not to be circular, it must be possible to prove properties of the problematically existent. But if so, then what happens to the *cogito*? If "This triangle has its three angles equal to two right angles, so this triangle exists" is not valid, then the inference, "I think, so I exist" cannot be valid. Conversely, if the inference from thought to existence is valid, then Descartes cannot prove that the triangle (or God) has certain properties without first knowing whether the triangle exists. Kenny concludes that the *cogito* and the ontological argument cannot both be valid, which he regards as a major problem for the Cartesian system.

As far as the interpretation of Descartes goes, I think Kenny is quite right to attribute a theory of possible objects to Descartes. This is argued in more detail in (9) than in (8) and it seems to me to be supported even more strongly by a passage Kenny does not cite (AT V, 160). But it is not clear that the theory cannot be defended for some distance against Quinean objections, or that it is inconsistent with the *cogito*. Presumably one wants to make the subject predicate distinction both with actual objects and with possible objects. As Kenny himself remarks, though "neither Pegasus nor Pegasus' shape exists . . . Pegasus is a non-existent substance, whereas Pegasus' shape is a non-existent mode" (7). The crucial question is whether the thinking which is posited in the premiss of the *cogito* is posited as an existent mode. If it is, then it will require an existent substance to inhere in.

As for the queries about whether the possible fat man in the doorway is identical with the possible bald man in the doorway, it might be argued that these descriptions are not sufficiently definite for us to be able to answer identity-questions about their referents (Cf. Rescher, (35)). Is the Bronte sister who wrote novels identical with the British authoress who was a younger sister? How could we possibly decide? Neither description picks out just one individual, even if we restrict ourselves to the actual. If we allow our descriptions to range over non-existent possible individuals, then no putatively definite description will pick out just one individual unless it is a complete description in the Leibnizian sense. So we should not expect to be able to answer, or even satisfactorily frame, specific identity questions about possible individuals, though we might be able to say that in general two possible

individuals are identical if their individual concepts are identical. In the end the difficulties the ontological argument involves concern the principle of the identity of indiscernibles and the notion of a complete individual concept. So the confrontation of Descartes with 20th century objections leads very quickly to reflection on the problems of the Leibnizian system.

## II. SPINOZA

In the recent literature on Descartes, there is a considerable body of works whose virtues are as much philosophical as they are scholarly in the sense that these works offer as much to interest someone for whom philosophy effectively begins in this century as they do to interest one whose primary concern is with what Descartes' views really were. There is not yet a comparable body of philosophical scholarship on Spinoza, whose study remains more the preserve of historians who are not at the same time deeply involved in contemporary debates. There is, nonetheless, a great deal of interesting recent work, the bulk of which is French, and the most significant of which, clearly, is Martial Gueroult's massive three volume study of the *Ethics* (33). So far only the first volume, dealing with Part I of the *Ethics*, has appeared. But it is already plain that the work will be of immense value to students of Spinoza. In his nearly 600 pages of commentary on the 39 pages of Spinoza's text, there is hardly any important problem of interpretation which he does not discuss, and in some measure at least, illuminate.

The central theme of Gueroult's work, which guides both his analysis of the structure of *De Deo* and his interpretation of its doctrines, is Spinoza's rationalism. Rationalism is understood here, not as a doctrine about the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge, but as an affirmation of the complete intelligibility for man of the essences of all things, both finite and infinite. Gueroult rightly makes this the primary article of faith for Spinozism, and he draws from it a number of important conclusions, of which I shall comment on two which I find particularly interesting.

The first concerns the relation of the attributes to substance. Gueroult's stress on the absolute intelligibility of God in Spinoza's system leads him to reject strongly the "subjectivist" interpretation of the attributes according to which the attributes have no real existence in the essence of God, but are only "subjective modes of thinking," ways in

which the mind conceives a simple reality which lies forever beyond its grasp, like a Kantian noumenon. Gueroult devotes a long and (to my mind) entirely successful appendix to a detailed refutation of the case for this widespread misinterpretation.

Gueroult's own interpretation conceives Spinoza's substance as a complex whole whose essence is constituted by an infinity of really distinct elements, the attributes, each of which satisfies in its own right the definition of substance. So substance is identical with the totality of its attributes, and each attribute both exists in itself and is conceived through itself. This is very similar to a position I have argued for myself (31), but Gueroult is able to support it with textual evidence I missed (e.g., E IP29S which says quite explicitly that the attributes exist in themselves) and takes up problems inherent in it which I neglected. As Gueroult points out, a good many objections to Spinozism can be shown to rest on a misunderstanding if this interpretation is accepted (p. 120). But it is not without difficulties of its own.

If each of the attributes is really distinct from every other attribute and if each satisfies the definition of substance, then it is not easy to see why we should not say that the attributes constitute an infinity of distinct substances rather than one substance. This is a central objection to any interpretation like Gueroult's and providing an answer to it is one of his main preoccupations in the first half of his commentary. If I understand him, his reply is this. If we considered the attributes separately, in abstraction from the concept of God as an absolutely infinite being, then it would be perfectly correct to think of each of the attributes as a distinct substance, existing in itself and conceived through itself. But once we conceive the idea of an *ens realissimum*, of a being whose nature it is to consist of infinitely many attributes and whose existence follows from that nature, then we are obliged to conceive of the attributes as constituents of *one* being and not as a mere collection of substances. God's existence does not result from the necessary existence of each of the elements which constitute his nature. It is rather their existence *together* which results from his necessary existence (p. 184)—or, as I think Gueroult would add, from his necessary existence as an indivisible and unique being, the elements of whose nature cannot be conceived as separable from it (p. 220), a being which excludes the existence of any other substance (p. 226).

Whether or not this will be regarded as an

ultimately satisfactory reply to the objection, Gueroult offers good reason for supposing that it was essentially Spinoza's reply. I might add that, given the necessary existence of each of the attributes considered in itself, the question of their existing as a collection of really distinct substances in the Cartesian sense of "real distinction" cannot arise. For though the attributes are not dependent on one another for their existence, nevertheless, since each attribute exists necessarily, it is simply not possible that one should exist without the others. Gueroult would not, I suspect, regard this as being an adequate explanation of their unity in one substance, but it does point up the fact that, even when considered as a collection the attributes are a very special sort of collection.

The second conclusion of Gueroult's which I want to comment on concerns his interpretation of the infinite modes, which seems to me to raise very serious difficulties. Spinoza's rationalism, he argues, requires that the human intellect be regarded, not as an effect of God's intellect, but as a part of it (p. 404). In this way any radical discrepancy between God's conception and man's (such as was contemplated by Descartes) is effectively blocked. The divine intellect, of which the human intellect is a part, does not pertain to *natura naturans* (i.e., the attributes) but to *natura naturata* (i.e., the modes) and is identified by Gueroult with (both) the infinite modes of the attribute of thought. On Gueroult's reading the immediate infinite mode of thought is the totality of thought essences (essences pensées, p. 318), or the universe of eternal ideas, whereas the mediate infinite mode of thought is the totality of finite modes of thought existing in duration. Any existing finite intellect is a part of the mediate infinite mode of thought; its eternal idea is a part of the immediate infinite mode of thought; and these two modes constitute the intellect of God. A similar analysis is applied to the infinite modes of extension.

Gueroult presents a case for this interpretation which is as well-documented as we could reasonably expect, considering how little Spinoza is prepared to tell us about the infinite modes, and it may be that he is right on the point of interpretation. But if he is, then Spinoza's doctrine of the nature of these modes looks inconsistent with what he holds concerning their causation. For as I've argued (31) and as Gueroult would seem to agree (p. 313 *et passim*), Spinoza's doctrine is that the attributes are in themselves adequate causes only of their infinite modes, but are not, in themselves, adequate causes

of their finite modes, whose production requires, as a further condition, the existence of other finite modes. But surely if an attribute is an adequate cause of a whole, it cannot at the same time fail to be an adequate cause of the individual parts of that whole. So if Spinoza does conceive of the finite modes as parts of the infinite modes, then his system is inconsistent.

We might note in this connection that Gueroult makes virtually no use of the notion of the laws of nature in his explication of Spinoza. I have been able to locate only one reference to laws (p. 250), and there they are identified with the series of finite things. No grounds for this are offered, and it does appear to be inconsistent with TdIE, 100-101, where the laws are said to be inscribed in the fixed and eternal things, which are sharply distinguished from the series of singular mutable things. This latter passage may offer the key to a different and more satisfactory interpretation of the infinite modes. But this is too complex an issue to be debated here.

### III. MALEBRANCHE

The most striking thing about recent work on Malebranche is that it is no longer a peculiarly French preoccupation. The first 60 years of this century saw only one full-length study of Malebranche in English and very few in any other non-French language. The past decade alone has added three more in English: Rome's (29), Walton's (30) and Connell's (23), and one in Italian, Nicolosi's (25). Besides these there are substantial French works by Rodis-Lewis (28) and Robinet (26, 27), and the papers collected in *Malebranche: L'Homme et l'oeuvre* (22). We can certainly not complain that Malebranche is being neglected by the scholars, though we might wish that their work would reach a wider audience. Malebranche is too interesting and important a figure to be left to the historians.

One of the principal issues in the flood of materials centers on the continuity of Malebranche's thought. There has been a tendency in French scholarship, aided recently by the new critical edition of the complete works (24), to emphasize the discontinuities, to agree with Arnauld in seeing a very different doctrine of the vision in God after the 10th *Eclaircissement* than was offered in *La recherche de la vérité*. E.g., Robinet's work (27) is a detailed elaboration of five distinct stages in Malebranche's development, with a most important break occurring in what Robinet calls "la crise de



1677." Before 1677, Malebranche conceives the ideas we see in God as particular, finite, created beings, a conception inspired in part by the Cartesian doctrine of the creation of the eternal truths. After 1677, in response to the criticisms of Foucher, Malebranche rejects the doctrine of the creation of the eternal truths and conceives what is seen in God as the unique idea of intelligible extension, infinite, general, and uncreated, but capable of representing the essences of all material things.

By contrast, the tendency of English language scholars, like Rome and Connell, has been to emphasize the continuities, treating the later versions of the doctrine as simply logical developments of the earlier versions. In this they may find encouragement in the work of Mme. Rodis-Lewis, who sees Malebranche's thought as evolving so gradually that the change is almost imperceptible. In particular she has been sceptical of Robinet's notion of a crisis of 1677, questioning whether Malebranche ever accepted the creation of eternal truths. See not only her (28), but also her contribution to (22), followed by a discussion with Gouhier, Robinet, and Gueroult, among others.

#### IV. LEIBNIZ

One of the interesting features of recent work on Leibniz is the extent to which it has been concerned with the reassessment of the critical works of Russell and Couturat, which are now some 70 years old. Though there has been a growing disposition to disagree with Russell's and Couturat's conclusions, nevertheless their work has provided a focus for much that has been written in the past decade. So, e.g., Kauppi (18) argues that Couturat's account of Leibniz' logic was distorted by Couturat's own preference for the extensional point of view, a preference characteristic of the period in which Couturat wrote, but which would not be so widely shared by logicians today. Similarly, Parkinson (20) takes up Russell's claim that Leibniz' metaphysics was almost entirely derived from his logic and subjects it to a very patient examination, culminating in the (perhaps not very surprising) conclusion that Russell's list of Leibniz' premisses is quite defective. Criticism of Russell and Couturat is also prominent in Rescher's work on Leibniz (21) and in the recently published monograph by Hide Ishiguro (17). These are perhaps the most important recent monographs on Leibniz, but as befits a philosopher who is not being left to

the historians, there are also a considerable number of interesting articles on Leibniz, many of which are collected in Frankfurt's anthology in the Anchor series (14).

Out of all this discussion there are a number of areas in which the conclusions of Russell and Couturat are being reversed. One concerns the problem of contingency and the principle of sufficient reason. Couturat had argued, and had persuaded Russell, whose earlier views were different, that the principle of sufficient reason was given by the formula: all true propositions are analytic. Couturat would not allow any exceptions to this doctrine for existential propositions or any place in Leibniz' philosophy for final causes. The only difference between necessary and contingent truths was that the analysis of contingent truths involved an infinite process which surpassed the powers of the human mind. So the system had a distinctly Spinozistic tendency.

Recent discussions by Parkinson (20), Rescher (21), and myself (14) have tended in some measure to go back to Russell's original view (before Couturat) that, apart from the proposition that God exists, existential truths are not analytic. Though both Parkinson (p. 106) and Rescher (p. 25) do, in various places, ascribe to Leibniz the view that all truths are analytic, they both also make an exception for existential truths about finite individuals (Parkinson, p. 107; Rescher, p. 18). And to the extent that they identify the principle of sufficient reason with the doctrine that all truths are analytic, they argue that it needs to be supplemented by a further principle—the principle of perfection or the best, which turns out to involve the assertion that God, in creating the world, chose to act in the best possible way. So final causes are, in the end, re-instated.

But very divergent views have been held about the status of this further principle. Parkinson argues (p. 109) that according to Leibniz, it is necessary (absolutely, not just hypothetically) that God should choose the best. Parkinson does not think this excludes the contingency of the world, since other worlds remain possible (i.e. free from contradiction in their own nature) even if they are not possible in relation to God's will. I, on the other hand, have argued (p. 95) that God's choice of the best does not follow from his nature, and Rescher has taken an intermediate position, holding that prior to 1686 Leibniz held God's choice to be necessary, but that after that date—which is generally agreed on as the date by which Leibniz'

mature philosophy had taken form—he regarded God's choice as contingent (p. 69).

One thing which emerges clearly from this is that in different places Leibniz expressed contradictory opinions. Both the necessity and the contingency of God's choice can be supported textually. What is not clear is that the texts supporting necessity can be separated neatly from those supporting contingency on the basis of their date. Some of the texts Parkinson relies on are dated as late as 1698, whereas the one I had emphasized is dated (tentatively, it is true) 1680–1682. Leibniz would appear to have vacillated on this issue. It is worth pointing out, however, that the line of defense which Parkinson stresses is not a very satisfactory one. It is an uncontroversial truth of modal logic that if  $p$  is necessary and  $p$  entails  $q$ , then  $q$  is necessary. So if it is (absolutely) necessary that God choose the best, and if the existence of the best world is (hypothetically) necessary in relation to his choice, then it is (absolutely) necessary that the best world exist. The alternative view, according to which God's choice is contingent, may be unattractive in its own way, but I do not think it is incoherent.

Another topic which has been the focus of a great deal of attention lately is Leibniz' doctrine of relations. Russell had been sharply critical of Leibniz on this point,<sup>2</sup> though he was hardly precise or consistent in defining the doctrine he wished to attack, sometimes ascribing to Leibniz the view that putatively relational propositions were “no propositions at all” or were “meaningless,” and sometimes ascribing to him the view that they were reducible to non-relational propositions. Both Parkinson (20) and Rescher (21) reject the former, more extreme view, but agree with Russell in attributing the latter, weaker thesis to Leibniz. And they also agree with Russell in holding that even the weaker thesis can easily be refuted by reference to asymmetric relations. A similar interpretation is offered by Mates (19).

The most recent studies of this topic, however, suggest that Leibniz did not hold even the weaker thesis. Thus both Hintikka (15) and Ishiguro (16, 17) argue that, insofar as Leibniz did have a reductionist program, it seems to have involved the reduction of relational propositions which refer explicitly to more than one individual to propositions which ascribe complex, implicitly relational predicates to one subject. The implicitly relational

predicates would not involve a specific reference to other individuals, though they would “conceal” bound variables. So, for example, “Paris loves Helen” would be rendered by some such paraphrase as “Paris loves and, *eo ipso*, Helen is loved.” The predicates used in the paraphrase are implicitly relational because “Paris loves” is to be regarded as short for  $(\exists x)$  (Paris loves  $x$ ).

This interpretation does seem easier to reconcile with Leibniz' various attempts at the reduction of relational propositions and has the added merit of ascribing to Leibniz a program which is not obviously impossible to carry out. No doubt the connective “and *eo ipso*” is not truth-functional, but that would hardly be an objection which Leibniz would regard as a serious one. What is more difficult is to see the motivation for what Ishiguro calls “the re-writing project.”

Other areas in which familiar interpretations of Leibniz are being challenged involve such topics as “Leibniz' Law” and his attitude toward singular propositions referring to non-actual possibles. E.g., Mates (19) has called attention to passages in which Leibniz showed himself to be aware that the principle of substitutivity *salva veritate* (*eadem sunt quorum unum alteri substitui potest, salva veritate*) requires qualification in certain contexts. Mates has also suggested that the substitutivity principle might be intended, not as a criterion of identity for individuals, but as a criterion of identity for concepts. Mates does not argue for this himself, but it has subsequently been argued for by Feldman (13) and Ishiguro (17). I find Miss Ishiguro's arguments more persuasive than Feldman's, but it does seem an awkward feature of her interpretation that concept-identity does not entail the synonymy of the words that express the concept. So the concepts triangle and trilateral are the same, even though the words “triangle” and “trilateral” do not mean the same. And yet Leibniz says that by a concept he means what is signified by a name.

Perhaps more startling is another conclusion which Mates (19) does explicitly argue for. In attempting to describe Leibniz' conceptual framework and to incorporate his interpretation in the semantics of a formalized language, Mates ascribes to Leibniz “a decision to regard as false every atomic sentence that contains a non-denoting name.” As evidence Mates cites the dictum, “Nothing has no properties,” which he interprets as committing

<sup>2</sup> Couturat however, had seen Leibniz as a precursor of De Morgan, Peirce and Schröder in the development of a logic of relations. Cf. *La Logique de Leibniz*, p. 303 n.

Leibniz to this policy. But surely Ishiguro is right (17) to attempt to reinstate the more usual interpretation of this dictum. We might note that Descartes, too, subscribes to the maxim that nothing has no properties. But as Kenny has recently emphasized, it is a key doctrine of Descartes that we can make true predications about the non-existent.

The above is hardly an exhaustive account of recent work on 17th century Continental philosophy. Much that is interesting has been left out for reasons of space and I am sure that I have missed much that would have been interesting. But perhaps the accompanying bibliography can make up some of the deficiencies of this survey.

*The Australian National University*

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The following is a selective bibliography for the period from 1960 on, prepared in the Department of Philosophy, Research School of Social Sciences, at the Australian National University. The preliminary searching and compilation was done principally by a research assistant, Mr. David Kipp, but I have also had assistance from Mrs. Jocelyn Harding and Miss Janette Paris.

Preference has been given to monographs, since the periodical literature is more adequately covered by the existing bibliographical aids, such as the Philosopher's Index, the Répertoire Bibliographique de la Philosophie, and the Internationale Bibliographie der Zeitschriftenliteratur. Reviews have been included only where both the review and the book under review seemed of more than usual interest. Fuller bibliographies of the Descartes and Spinoza literature for this period are to appear in Caton (2) and Freeman and Mandelbaum (32) respectively. A new journal, *Studia Leibnitiana*, has begun a continuous bibliography of current work on Leibniz.

Works dealing with more than one 17th century figure are listed under "miscellaneous."

Asterisks have been used to designate aids to scholarship which are of special interest.

### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

- |                     |  |                 |  |
|---------------------|--|-----------------|--|
| <i>AF</i>           | Archivio di Filosofia  | <i>CHM</i>      | Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale                                    |
| <i>AGP</i>          | Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie                            | <i>CJP</i>      | Canadian Journal of Philosophy                                 |
| <i>Arch. Hist.</i>  |  | <i>Dial.</i>    | Dialectica   |
| <i>ex. Sci.</i>     | Archive for History of Exact Sciences                            | <i>DZP</i>      | Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie                           |
| <i>AIHS</i>         | Archives Internationales d'Histoire des Sciences                 | <i>EP</i>       | Etudes philosophiques  |
| <i>Aj</i>           | Ajatus   | <i>FS</i>       | French Studies   |
| <i>Am. J. Phys.</i> | American Journal of Physics                                      | <i>GCFI</i>     | Giornale critico della filosofia italiana                      |
| <i>Ann. Sci.</i>    | Annals of Science  | <i>GM</i>       | Giornale di metafisica   |
| <i>ANTW</i>         | Algemeen Nederlands tijdschrift voor Wijsbegeerte en Psychologie | <i>IJPR</i>     | International Journal for Philosophy of Religion               |
| <i>AP</i>           | Archives de Philosophie  | <i>IPQ</i>      | International Philosophical Quarterly                          |
| <i>APD</i>          | Archives de Philosophie du Droit                                 | <i>JHI</i>      | Journal of History of Ideas                                    |
| <i>APQ</i>          | American Philosophical Quarterly                                 | <i>JHP</i>      | Journal of the History of Philosophy                           |
| <i>AS</i>           | L'Age de la Science  | <i>JP</i>       | Journal of Philosophy  |
| <i>Austr. J.P.</i>  | Australasian Journal of Philosophy                               | <i>JR</i>       | Journal of Religion  |
| <i>BJHS</i>         | British Journal for the History of Science                       | <i>Kin.</i>     | Kinesis  |
|                     |  | <i>KSt.</i>     | Kantstudien  |
|                     |  | <i>MLN</i>      | Modern Language Notes  |
|                     |  | <i>Mon.</i>     | Monist   |
|                     |  | <i>MS</i>       | Modern Schoolman   |
|                     |  | <i>NDJFL</i>    | Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic                             |
|                     |  | <i>NS</i>       | New Scholasticism  |
|                     |  | <i>PACPA</i>    | Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association |
|                     |  | <i>PAS</i>      | Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society                        |
|                     |  | <i>PBA</i>      | Proceedings of the British Academy                             |
|                     |  | <i>PF</i>       | Philosophy Forum   |
|                     |  | <i>Philos.</i>  | Philosophy   |
|                     |  | <i>PN</i>       | Philosophia Naturalis  |
|                     |  | <i>Pol. St.</i> | Political Studies  |
|                     |  | <i>PPR</i>      | Philosophy and Phenomenological Research                       |
|                     |  | <i>PR</i>       | Philosophical Review   |
|                     |  | <i>PRdsch.</i>  | Philosophische Rundschau                                       |
|                     |  | <i>REJ</i>      | Revue des études juives  |
|                     |  | <i>RHSA</i>     | Revue d'histoire des sciences et de leurs applications         |
|                     |  | <i>RM</i>       | Review of Metaphysics  |
|                     |  | <i>RMm</i>      | Revue de métaphysique et de morale                             |
|                     |  | <i>RP</i>       | Revue de Paris   |
|                     |  | <i>RPFE</i>     | Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger              |
|                     |  | <i>R. Pol.</i>  | Review of Politics   |

RS	Revue de synthèse
RSPT	Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques
RTL	Revue de théologie et de philosophie
St. Gen.	Studium generale
St. P.	Studia Philosophica
St. Phil.	Studies in Philology
Syn.	Synthese
WW	Wirkendes Wort
ZPF	Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung

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